

Hall (TX) Border Security S&T

H.R. 3916 Section-by-Section

Section 1 is a requirement for the Science and Technology Directorate (DHS S&T) to clearly define the operational requirements of technologies they are developing for Customs and Border Patrol and other end-users. These 1-3 year product development projects are part of the Transition portfolio at DHS S&T and comprise the bulk of research and development spending (~70 percent). The language calls for DHS S&T to include operational requirements as part of any agreement, including technology transfer agreements (TTA), to undertake product development activities. Current activities in this area include improved protective equipment for Border Patrol officers, new detection and identification techniques for use on the border, and inspection techniques that improve safety and efficiency of commerce at ports of entry.

Section 2 extends the S&T Advisory Committee, which was last extended through December 31st, 2008 in the SAFE Ports Act of 2006. Currently S&T is appointing new members and expects to hold a meeting this fall. The Committee has not met since November 2005. This section would further extend the Advisory Committee through December 31, 2012 to allow the Secretary ongoing advice from some of our nation's best scientists, engineers, and security specialists.

Section 3 calls for a NRC study to provide a roadmap for research activities in the border/maritime division. This section seeks to provide the Research portfolio director with additional material to help make long-term investments in science and technology that will enable the next generation of border and maritime security technologies. DHS S&T aims to support this type of long-term research at roughly 20 percent of their budget.

Section 4 reminds DHS of their role as a potential operator of Unmanned Aerial Vehicles (UAVs) in the national airspace and directs them to continue their work in the Joint Planning and Development Office accordingly. Currently, operation of UAVs in national airspace requires considerable advance planning and approval from the Federal Aviation Administration. This section requires DHS to seek the ability to routinely and safely operate UAVs for border and maritime security missions. To this end, the section also authorizes DHS to take part in pilot projects to obtain whatever data is necessary to make an informed decision about how UAVs can be safely included in the airspace.

Section 5 requires DHS to create a formal research program in the area of tunnel detection, and to coordinate with similar DoD activities. In addition, the section calls for priority to be given to technologies that would allow real-time detection of tunnels and would allow for immediate action by CBP.

Section 6 requires the Under Secretary and Director of NIST to begin a joint R&D project of anti-counterfeit technologies and standards. Furthermore, DHS and NIST are charged with coordinating research activities with other federal agencies engaged in related research. Finally the section requires a report to Congress on the research programs undertaken under this section one year after enactment.